

SECRET

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

6 January 1982

MEMORANDUM

GHANA: A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT RAWLINGS

SUMMARY

Jerry Rawlings, Ghana's new head of state, previously ruled the country for four months in 1979, and his performance and problems then may offer some clues as to what to expect in the future. Rawlings' first "revolution" had limited populist goals, he proved suprisingly moderate, and Western interests did not suffer in the end.

Rawlings' rule, however, produced mixed results, and the many problems he faced were potentially exploitable by the Soviets, Cubans, and radical African states such as Libya and Ethiopia. These problems included ideological and tribal rivalry, economic deterioration, and a divided and ill-disciplined military. These difficulties persist and may intensify, offering new opportunities for possible foreign meddling detrimental to US interests. Rawlings' rule may prove even shakier than before, and he could move Ghana in a more radical direction.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council in Power

After coming to power in a bloody coup in June 1979, Rawlings ruled Ghana for four months as the chairman of a group of enlisted men and junior officers known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The coup was a direct response to the economic mismanagement and corruption that marked the previous eight years of military rule. Because of his espousal

This memorandum was prepared by [] West and East Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It was requested by Fred Wattering of the National Security Council and has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations, the Offices of Near East-South Asia Analysis and Central Reference, and the National Intelligence Officer for Africa. Information as of 5 January 1982 was used in preparation of this paper. Comments and questions are welcome and should be addressed to the Chief, West and East Africa Division, []

ALA 82-1000

SECRET

of the common man's cause, Rawlings enjoyed broad public support at the onset and Rawlings quickly became a folk hero to Ghana's oppressed military and economic have-not groups. [REDACTED] 25X1

Rawlings propounded populist aims, but his "revolution" had limited objectives. Before Ghana's scheduled return to civilian rule in September 1979, he sought to cleanse the armed forces and public life generally of corruption and extravagance, and to eradicate previous economic malpractices that had become a way of life and brought Ghana to the brink of financial chaos. [REDACTED] 25X1

Reflecting the bitter frustrations of many Ghanaians, Rawlings in his housecleaning ordered the execution of eight senior military officers--including three former heads of state--and numerous other officers and former government officials were sentenced by secret courts to long prison terms. Rawlings' ire also fell on Ghana's petty traders, who were blamed for the country's rampant inflation and black marketeering. He decreed horsewhippings by roving bands of soldiers for traders who refused to lower prices and make more goods available. [REDACTED] 25X1

The AFRC's "revolution" yielded few concrete results and proved more rhetorical than substantive, reflecting the general lack of education, sophistication, and political experience among AFRC members. Rawlings' popularity gradually eroded; while discipline broke down in the army and never fully recovered. The economy continued to deteriorate compounded by Nigeria's boycott of crude oil deliveries in reaction to the executions. The public also came to resent arbitrary treatment at the hands of rank and file soldiers. [REDACTED] 25X1

As the target date for civilian rule approached, it was an open question whether the AFRC would hold together long enough to hand over power. The regime degenerated into increasingly divisive ideological infighting. The more radical elements, opposed to a return to civilian rule, were barely curbed by Rawlings and the moderates. [REDACTED] 25X1

The council also was diverted by tribal bickering. A faction representing the country's Akan speaking tribes (44 percent of the population) soon became more concerned about ethnic balance than radicalizing the "revolution". This faction worried about what it perceived as increasing dominance by Rawlings' Ewe tribe, which accounted for 40 percent of the military but only 13 percent of the population. [REDACTED] 25X1

SECRET

SECRET

Rawlings the Man

Despite his rhetoric, Rawlings appears not to be a true ideologue but a populist who is deeply angered at the social injustices that typify Ghanaian society. He is particularly frustrated with the gap between rich and poor and the collapse of the Ghanaian economy which he attributes to mismanagement, corruption and the greed of Ghana's Westernized elite and professional classes. This sense of outrage has motivated both of his coups. [REDACTED]

Rawlings is an idealist, but not a deep thinker or realistic planner. After his June 1979 coup, he called for a basic restructuring of society, but was never able to formulate adequately plans for such a reformation. His current calls for a "Holy War" to rectify social ills is likely to be a similarly ill-thought out proposition. [REDACTED]

Indicative of his ideological ambivalence, Rawlings rebuffed Ethiopia and Libyan delegations to Accra after the June 1979 coup, despite his calls for an "Ethiopian solution." Rawlings was antagonized by Fidel Castro's belittling of the AFRC "revolution" during a visit to Havana for the 1979 Non-Aligned summit. On the other hand, during the Limann era, Rawlings allowed himself to be courted by the Libyans, visited Tripoli, and praised Libyan society. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During his four months of rule in 1979, Rawlings was careful not to jeopardize relations with the West, probably realizing Western aid donors and Western-backed financial institutions were the principal props of Ghana's shaky economy. [REDACTED]

Rawlings is apparently not one to listen consistently to any one of his advisers. His tendency to listen first to one faction and then another causes his decisions to appear inconsistent and vacillating. Nevertheless, having failed in seeing through the aims of his first coup, and having been persuaded by moderate advisers to allow a reversion to civilian rule, Rawlings may now tend to listen to more radical advice. [REDACTED]

Rawlings, 34, is the son of a Scottish father and an Ewe mother. After attending flight training school in 1968, he was commissioned a pilot officer in 1969. He was promoted to flight lieutenant in 1978. In April 1978 despite being rated as the best pilot in the air force, he was passed over for promotion.

SECRET

The Limann government retired Rawlings from the air force in November 1979. [REDACTED]

Influences on Rawlings--Past and Present

Power in Rawlings' first regime was vested in the 14-man AFRC and he served as its chairman. The AFRC consisted of five officers, eight noncommissioned officers, and one private. Council members were united only by a sense of outrage at their former superiors and to a lesser degree, by career grievances. The council's central characteristics were its lack of administrative experience, ignorance of economics and diplomacy, and apparent divergence of views on how to proceed. In addition, tribal animosities between the Ewes, who held six positions on the council, antagonized members of other tribes and limited the council's effectiveness. Most former AFRC members have been in exile since September 1979. [REDACTED]

In addition to Rawlings, the AFRC's key members were:

-- Captain Boakye Djan - A member of the Akan tribe and [REDACTED]

-- Major Mensah Poku - A member of the Akan tribe. Poku is [REDACTED]

-- Major Mensah Ghedemah - A member of the Ewe tribe. [REDACTED]

SECRET

-- Col. Peter Tasiri Azonoo - A member of the Ewe tribe,

[REDACTED]

In addition, Rawlings at times depended for advice on two civilians who were not council members. Although radicals, they did not hold sway over Rawlings who had his ups and downs with them. These two men were:

-- Kojo Tsikata - A member of the Ewe tribe and a retired military officer,

[REDACTED]

-- Tsatsu Tsikata - He is either Kojo's brother or cousin,

[REDACTED]

Rawlings has so far publicly announced the appointment of two moderate figures from his previous regime:

-- Brigadier Joseph Nunoo-Mensah - He is the new Chief of the Defense Staff and a Fanti tribesman, of the cluster of Akan-speaking tribes.

[REDACTED]

-- Brigadier Arnold Quainoo - He is the new army commander and of mixed Akan-Ewe blood.

[REDACTED]

SECRET

25X1

25X1

25X6

25X6

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

SECRET

[REDACTED]

Both Nunoo-Mensah and Quainoo were members of the civilian/AFRC transition planning committee that oversaw the reversion to civilian rule. Rawlings probably named both men to their positions to curry favor with the military and encourage their support for the coup. As moderates, Nunoo-Mensah and Quainoo are likely to try to temper more radical advice coming from the Tsikatas and others yet to emerge. [REDACTED]

Looking Ahead

Rawlings clearly is continuing to have problems in organizing his new regime and he has not yet announced the membership of the ruling Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). This suggests that he is having trouble attracting the kind of civilians he needs if the regime is to have a broad tribal and ideological balance as well as men of skill and experience. If this trend continues, it is possible that Rawlings, by default, will become dependent on leftist fringe groups and radical advisers seeking to gain influence. [REDACTED]

There are other risks ahead. It is reasonable to expect that the second Rawlings regime will prove more "revolutionary" than the first one and to be less pro-Western than the ousted Limann government. Furthermore, Rawlings probably would be forced to turn to Libya or other radical states if Western economic aid to Ghana began to dry up, if the country's Nigerian oil supply were disrupted, or if he were unable to regain control of the shattered armed forces. Cuban troops, for instance, could be requested to help provide security. Unless Rawlings can show quick progress in restoring public order and military discipline, as well as giving his rule some real direction, chances for a counter coup might increase. [REDACTED]

MEMORANDUM FOR:

has informed me you need additional background material on Libyans in Africa.

Hope this is useful.

If I can be of further help, call me on These are new numbers effective today.

John Helgerson

Date Feb 12, 1982

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1